

Students have radio days

Shawano school's ham station ends worldwide talking tour

By Rick Barlow

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WA200BZW may have left the airwaves for good Friday night, but the memories of the many experiences shared around the world will remain.

The weeklong ham radio station at Franklin Middle School has been a good experience for those involved, according to Alfred Hovey Jr., trustee of the Shawano Schools Radio Club, which held the event.

"I think this has been a really good idea," Hovey said. "There's been a lot of interesting things that have happened."

Hovey said it was funny how some of the students clammed up when they sat in front of the microphone and how others talked so fast they found it hard to spell Shawano to listeners in Japan.

The students had originally set a goal of contacting all 50 states and several countries, he said. When they closed shop, they had made 1,602 contacts reaching all 50

states many times over and 57 foreign countries, he said.

"The contacts have been unbelievable," he said. A team of scientists from McMurdo Station in Antarctica called the station one night, he said.

Twelve-year-old Tania Paterick said she received a surprise when she contacted a man in Salinas, Calif., where her aunt used to live and near where her mother now lives.

"We just got to chatting on this thing and he contacted my mother living 35 miles northeast of Salinas," she said. "I heard my mom's voice over the radio!"

Emily Petersen, 12, talked with contacts in Indonesia and in Liberia in Africa but the signal was weak, she said.

"I'm just glad to be on the ham radio," she said. "I like to see how many places I can contact and make new friends."

Petersen said she plans to get an operator's license this summer providing she learns Morse Code.

Carrie Hovey, 12, reached Lima,

Peru, at the time when Pope John Paul II was visiting. She said she spoke with a station there that opened especially for the pope's South American tour.

"It was weird because you sometimes didn't understand what they said," she said.

Fourteen-year-old Joel Yeakey, who called the U.S. embassy in the nation of Guinea-Bissau located in northwestern Africa, said he'd also like to get his license.

"I could contact people all over the world without using the phone," he said.

Nathan Bosdeck, 12, became interested in ham radio after he saw Hovey carrying a portable ham radio around. He said he then got involved in the Radio Club. Bosdeck listens to Morse Code about 15 minutes a night to master it for the license. He also has to take a 30-question test.

Bosdeck said he called Russia, Sweden, Denmark and Indonesia. He also talked to a man in Northern Wales who was driving in his car.

"It's lots of fun talking to people," he said. "And it's a lot less expensive than on the telephone."

Even though the station is officially off the air, Hovey said they are receiving hundreds of letters from people returning radio calls. They will answer in the form of postcards that identify the station.

The station was started as a way to commemorate Wisconsin's entry into the union in May 1848. The Shawano Schools Radio Club applied to the Federal Communications Commission for a special "200" call sign to amateurs as part of the last phase of the bicentennial celebration of the U.S. Constitution.

Each state has been given a 200 number for one week to make radio calls across the country and the world. The program started in December 1987 and will run until the end of the year.

Twenty-eight Franklin students as well as amateur radio operators from the area were involved in the only station representing Northeast Wisconsin.